

FOOD SAFETY BULLETIN: Treated Seed Contamination

Purpose:

Contamination of grain deliveries with treated seed occurs every year. This bulletin is intended to bring awareness to the issue as we head into the time of year when we are most at risk and highlight preventative steps for the elevator and the farmer to reduce this food safety risk in grain products intended for human and animal consumption. We include inoculated seed in the treated seed category, therefore same rules apply.

Risk:

It is a contravention of the Canada Grain Act to deliver or accept delivery of grain contaminated with treated seed. For this reason as well as food safety risks and the demands of processors and export markets elevators have a zero tolerance for this type of contamination. It only takes a trace amount of treated seed in a shipment to trigger a rejection of a load or a vessel. Rejection by a foreign market could lead to trade restrictions if the importing country isn't confident that we can prevent this contamination from occurring in the future.

Farmers will have their load rejected if treated/inoculated seed is discovered in their delivery. If the contamination is discovered after the load is dumped, they may end up responsible for contaminating additional grain inventory. The farmer may also be responsible for the costs associated with cleaning out equipment and for any costs associated with the loss of product.

Prevention: At the Farm

Why is this happening? Farmers are using the same equipment to handle bulk seed and harvested grain on farm. It only takes a trace amount of treated seed or residue to cause a problem. The good news is this risk can be controlled through good on-farm practices.

- Use dedicated equipment (augers, trucks, carts, etc), for the handling of treated seed or ensure it is effectively cleaned out prior to being used for handling harvested grains.
- Thorough cleanout of trucks and carts includes sweep or vacuum of all accessible surfaces followed by a pressure wash to remove all residues. Inspect all racks and tarps to ensure treated seed is not trapped and does not show any signs of seed treatment residue. Compressed air may be used to remove treated seed that is trapped in tubing or other un-accessible areas. Driving empty down a bumpy road can loosen trapped and unseen treated seed.

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- Thorough cleanout of augers includes a sweep or vacuum of accessible surfaces, reversing the auger and flushing with water or other untreated seed (not harvested grain). The most effective measure is using a dedicated auger for treated seed.

Prevention: At the Elevator

Our receiving inspection is a critical step in our efforts to eliminate the occurrence of treated seed contamination within the elevator. We know we are more at risk this time of year therefore our efforts are more diligent. Remember, it only takes a trace amount of residue to cause a problem.

- At Viterra, we have a zero tolerance for treated/inoculated seed!
- Treated seed varies in color.
 - In Canada there are color standards for pesticide seed treatments (cereals – pink or red; Canola – baby blue or green) however cross-contamination can occur in transfer equipment resulting in incorrect coloring.
 - Seed coatings or stains may appear greasy or powdery and the surface area distribution ranges from tiny flecks to complete coverage.
- Do not assume artificial coloring is a marker dye.
- When the truck pulls onto the scale, the truck is visually scanned for obvious signs of seed treatment on tarps, truck boxes, rails, etc. If there is any evidence of seed treatment, the load will be rejected.

We all play an important role in the safety of our food supply.